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What's On?



Donovan Asks Suspension Of Judgment on Powers

By BEN GROSS

(Reprinted from yesterday's late editions)

Did Francis Gary Powers, our U-2 spy, "chicken-out" and go back on his country during his Moscow trial? James E. Donovan, the lawyer who negotiated the simultaneous release of Powers,

Col. Rudolf Abel, the master Russian spy, and American student Frederic L. Pryor, asked us to suspend judgment during a taped interview on "David Brinkley's Journal" (Channel 4, 10:30) Wednesday night.

"In fairness to Powers, it ought to be realized that prior to the actual trial he had been held incommunicado for over 100 days," he told viewers of this program.

Donovan added that the pilot was kept in solitary confinement and subjected to "constant repetitive questioning, interrogation. . . . No one was permitted to see Powers until he appeared on the stage. He spoke his lines; and he is asked only questions about which the answers have been re-

peatedly secured; and accordingly they knew exactly what answers would come to every question that's asked.

"Now it's rather easy for us sitting over here to judge the conduct of a man who has been subjected to 100 days of this kind of treatment."

Won't Discuss Flight

Donovan, who had accompanied Powers back to this country, admitted that it would not be "fair" for him to discuss the pilot's flight to Russia. "I think in due course he will tell us his own story."

As to whether it was to the advantage of the United States to exchange Powers for such an accomplished espionage chief as Abel, Donovan said, "it was a decision undertaken on the high government level." But, he pointed



Johnny Carson



James E. Donovan

out. During Abel's trial, he recalled, he had argued against the death penalty on the ground that at some foreseeable future "an American of equivalent rank will be captured by Soviet Russia or an ally of Russia" and that at such time an exchange of prisoners would be considered to be in "the best national interests of the United States."

But, were these two spies of "equivalent rank"? That question Donovan did not answer.

ed out, that Abel had been in prison for over 4½ years and that at the present time "the only information he could communicate to Moscow would be some detailed descriptions of life in the penitentiary in Atlanta."

Will Suspect Abel

But couldn't he be used again in Soviet intelligence work?

"My own judgment is that this would not be done," Donovan said, "because . . . there would always be lingering suspicion, especially in a semi-Oriental mind, that he had made some private deal with me to become a double agent."

Donovan, who had served as Abel's court-appointed lawyer during his trial here in 1957, cast some interesting sidelights on his secret negotiations with the Soviet government for the releases of both spies, which also resulted in the freeing of Pryor.

Donovan, with considerable self-satisfaction, did make one pertinent